



Suffolk Moth Group Newsletter

Issue 21 - November 2000

Edited by Jon Nicholls

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Editorial

This has been another busy summer for the SMG. The Friday night meetings have been very well attended and it is good to see so many new faces becoming regular attenders. However this has led to some problems when emptying traps due to the large numbers involved and the over-enthusiasm of some. It needs to be remembered by all that the main function of the traps is to attract moths to be recorded and that this must be done first, usually by the owner of the trap. Everyone can then get a good look at the contents.

I have not been able to attend as many Friday sessions as I would have liked and so I am grateful for Tony's help in writing up those meetings.

This situation is likely to get worse next year and so if there is anyone out there who would be interested in helping with the production of this newsletter then please let me know.

The traps tend to go very quiet at this time of year but it is still worth putting them on as there are still some interesting species to be found. You never know!

A Suffolk Mother in Dorset - Neil Sherman

Every year, I make a pilgrimage to my relatives who live in Dorset for a short holiday. This gives me the opportunity to undertake some mothing in a different county, hopefully giving me the chance to see new species I wouldn't normally see back home.

I also have a contact there interested in moths, who happens to be the next door neighbour to where I stay! He has access to some good sites, and we always get together and go to one of these sites when I am in Dorset.

This year I went to Dorset twice, in late August and in early October. In August, we went into the sand dunes and heathland habitat around Studland NNR. This is a wonderful area for all forms of wildlife including moths.

We set up 4 traps covering the beach, heath and wet woodland. Conditions looked reasonable, with little wind, warm temperatures but unfortunately a full moon. First species in was new to me, the Grass Eggar (looking like a chocolate brown version of the Oak Eggar). A good start, but more was to come. On the heathland side, we caught several Beautiful Yellow Underwing, Horse Chestnut (a common species there which doesn't occur in Suffolk) and lots of Narrow-winged Pug. The trap placed near the wet woodland had some good moths including large numbers of Sharp-angled peacock (strangely to me this is more common than the Peacock Moth in Dorset - the reverse is true for Suffolk!), Gold-spot (this was a new species for Chris, my contact but I have seen in regularly on the Suffolk marshes) Small Rufous and Southern Wainscot. The traps placed in the sand dunes produced some of the best moths with Silver Hook, Archer's Dart (common), more Grass Eggars and most amazingly over 100 Shore Wainscot! Never had both of us seen so many of this species before, as back in Suffolk on the coast the most I normally see is 2-3! They were everywhere - in the grass around the trap, in the trap, on the trap and even on us! The micro moths were not ignored, with large numbers of *Udea ferrugalis*, *Nomophila noctuella* and a few *Agriphila latistria* of note. Also appearing in one of the traps was a Bordered Straw, which along with the large numbers of the afore mentioned micros showed that there had been some migration going on.

In October, we set up our 4 lights on the grassy slopes above Old Harry Rocks again near Studland Bay. This time, our target was migrants, and we were not disappointed.

Conditions looked excellent, with a light southerly breeze, warmth and good cloud cover. Unfortunately, as soon as we had finished setting up the equipment it started to rain, a light but uncomfortable steady drizzle. We decided as it was still warm to leave the lights on for a while to see what we caught. Good job we did as the moths soon started to dash in. The 2 lights placed in the shelter of some scrub did the best, with the trap put out on the exposed cliff top soon being put away as it caught few moths!

We caught good numbers of Pearly Underwing, Dark Sword-grass, *Udea ferrugalis* and *Nomophila noctuella*. More interesting were 4 Bordered Straw, 2 White-speck (new to me) and also 2 Cosmopolitan (another new one for me). Some resident species also put in an appearance with several Black Rustics (a species only just spreading into Suffolk with a few recent records - a very common species in Dorset - Chris didn't know why I was getting so excited about them!) and Barred Sallows from a nearby small woodland.

Also on this later trip I found both a Vestal and a Hummingbird Hawk-moth during the day, proving that a good number of migrants were around.

From this, you can see why I return every year, Dorset being an excellent county for moths, but I still think Suffolk is better!

Records from recorders around the county

Rushmere St Andrew - Jeff Higgott

Being so close to Ipswich Golf course (in fact within the same tetrad) there is bound to be a lot of overlap with Neil Sherman's records - I'm sure the majority of our moths are 'migrants' from Neil's

catching area.

The Millennium started slowly. A Northern Winter Moth on Jan 1st was the first moth trapped and the only other species encountered during the month were Pale Brindled Beauty and Spring Usher.

February was a little better with 11 species, the highlight being *Ypsolopha ustella* on 24th. March's highlights were Small Brindled Beauty (11th), Oak Beauty and Lead-coloured Drab with good numbers of Small and Common Quakers - though as with other recorders numbers were found to be down on 1999.

Sixty species found their way into the trap in April. Early Tooth-striped was new to the garden (25th), as was Purple Thorn and *Ypsolopha mucronella*. Seven Great Prominents were also trapped and a single Satellite. Totals started to creep up in June. Notable records included Broom-tip (13th), Brindled White-spot (31st), Puss Moth, Scarce Tissue, 5 White Colon, *Cryptoblades bistriga*, the first Diamond-backed Moths of the year and the first 5 of 18 Orange Footman trapped during the year.

July trapping reached 243 species. Two Buttoned Snouts appeared mid-month and a Dotted Fan-foot on 19th. Other notable records included four Festoon, 2 Ghost Moth, a Leopard Moth, a Large Nutmeg, another Puss Moth, 1 Shaded Fan-foot, 1 Small White Wave, 1 Tawny Wave (19th), 1 White-point (1st), 1 Rusty-dot Pearl (28th), 3 Large Tabby and 1 *Plutella porrectella*.

The July highlight was a pristine Bedstraw Hawk-moth on 5th which became the 8th species of Hawk-moth for the year. A Dark Sword-grass (12th) added to the list of migrants. Two Dusky Brocades were new to the garden, as were Lackey, Southern Wainscot, Thistle Ermine, European Corn Borer (2). A *Niditinea fuscella*, the Brown-dotted Clothes Moth, found on an upstairs ceiling will be a new addition to the SMG list if confirmed.

Another 29 species were added to the garden list in August (not a surprising total considering we have only been in the house for two years). The new ones included Beautiful Yellow Underwing, Black Arches (11), Dark Spinach, Flame Carpet, Phoenix, Sharp-angled Carpet, Twin-spotted Wainscot, *Udea lutealis*, *Evergestis pallidata*, *Calamotropha paludella*, *Ypsolopha scabrella*. Other notable records included 1 Dark Sword-grass, Hornet Moth (2 'used' pupal cases found in the Silver Poplar), 1 Lunar Yellow Underwing, 1 Square-spotted Clay, 1 Least Carpet and 17 White-point. These brought the year 2000 eight month lepidoptera total to 438 species.

Ipswich Golf Club, August to September 2000 - Neil Sherman

The month of August at last produced a prolonged period of warm nights, the first good spell of mothing activity since mid-June. The macro moth total for this month was 134 species, the best of the year.

Moths of note seen during this period were: Festoon (3 on the 1st were the last of the year), Grass Emerald, Polar Hawk-moth, Pine Hawk-moth (good to see back in some numbers after last years absence), Olive (a singleton on the 1st), Chinese Character (first one of the year on the 5th - has been in low numbers everywhere this year), Buff Footman, Black Arches, Southern Wainscot (2 more on the 5th after the first site record last month), a superb fresh Old Lady (caught in a trap also on the 5th - not supposedly attracted to light!), Garden Dart (a very scarce species despite its name), Shaded Fan-foot, Tawny Wave (11th), Broom-tip, Pinion-streaked Snout (another on the 17th - definitely seems to be more prevalent this year) and Lunar Yellow Underwing (on the 25th). Migration had appeared to have taken place during the month with Silver Y and *Nomophila noctuella* very common sightings during the day, but were not seen much in the light trap. Other migrants seen were the Dark Sword-grass (on the 11th and 14th), White-point (25th) and the Vestal (a new site record on the 25th).

Day sightings this month were an Elephant Hawk-moth caterpillar (walking across one of the greens searching for a pupation site), Common Heath and a dead Svensson's Copper Underwing found in the tea sheds.

Micros have also been in good numbers, with some that are normally out earlier appearing due to the bad weather last month. Of interest were *Evergestis extimalis* (1st), *Pempelia palumbella*, *Limnacea*

phragmitella, *Scoparia basistrigalis* (on the 5th), *Phycitodes binaevella*, *Batia lunaris*, *Crambus hamella* (27th) and *Hypatima rhomboidella* (common). New micros for the site list have included: *Ypsolopha scabrella* (27th), *Cochyliis dubitana* (also on the 27th), *Eucosma hohenwartiana* (14th), *Swammerdamia pyrella* (on both the 5th and the 11th), *Athrips mouffetella* (7th), *Coleophora saturatella* (a very distinctive moth seen on the 7th), *Phycitodes maritima* (two records on the 5th and 11th) and most interestingly a *Dioryctria schuetzeella* (1st) which has only been seen once before in the county by Arthur Watchman on 7th August 1986.

The most unusual visitor this month was a Brown Argus butterfly, the first sighting of the year on the 5th!

September normally sees the beginning of the decline in moths in the trap, and this year was no exception. Cold and wet weather also made it not worthwhile putting the moth trap out, a trend which was to continue into October. 44 species of macros were seen and of note were; White-point (a common migrant late in the year on the 3rd), Pinion-streaked Snout (seen again twice this month on the 8th and 11th), Dingy Footman (a late or second brood individual on the 11th), the first Brindled Green (also on the 11th), Heath Rustic (on the 18th), Deep-brown Dart, Feathered Gothic, Hedge Rustic and the first of many Lunar Underwings on the 18th. Micros seen at light of interest were *Ypsolopha sylvella* (a scarcely recorded species in Suffolk) and *Ypsolopha alpella* (more common than the similarly marked *Y. sylvella*). Searching during the day resulted in the discovery of two types of pug larva; the Ling Pug (only a race of the Wormwood Pug) on Heather on the 5th and several caterpillars of the Triple-spotted Pug on Angelica flower heads (a new site record).

September 24th was National moth night, and I ran 2 traps at the Golf course. The most common species seen was the Lunar Underwing (41), but also seen were Spruce Carpet, Barred Red, the pretty Frosted Orange, Brown-spot Pinion (the first of the year), Autumnal Rustic, *Acleris emargana* and the migrant *Udea ferrugalis*, which surprisingly was a new site record!

Felixstowe, September to October 2000 - Jon Nicholls

Towards the end of August numbers seemed to be going down with the weather and September started with most nights producing around fifteen species. The first week in September brought the first Feathered Ranunculus of the season and by the end of the month over six hundred had visited the trap. This is a distinct improvement on the ninety eight that I had in 1999 but nowhere close to over one thousand found in 1997.

On the 5th the distinctive Ypsolophid, *Ypsolopha parenthesella*, was found reflecting its current widespread distribution in Suffolk. Another fourteen *Tachystola acroxantha* appeared in September, verifying their presence for 2000. Other notable species this month were Blair's Shoulder Knot, Scarce Bordered Straw and Dark Sword Grass.

A number of moths have appeared for the first time this month including ; Black Rustic, Dingy Shell, Frosted Orange and Spruce Carpet. Then in October I had a Juniper Carpet, previously only recorded in two tetrads around Bury St Edmunds and one near Lowestoft. This could be another moth, along with Blair's Shoulder Knot, Freyer's Pug and Cypress Pug, that is going to move through the county in the next few years feeding on garden hedges. Keep an eye open for it at the traps next year.

Eye, August to September 2000 - Paul Kitchener

Paul reports an exciting couple of months with six new species and several migrants making up for such a dull July. Interesting moths included; Bird's Wing, Bulrush Wainscot, Centre-barred Sallow (twice usual numbers), Dark Spectacle (first record), Dark Sword-grass, Dusky-lemon Sallow (first record), Dusky Thorn (best ever - maximum of 22), Frosted Orange, Large Thorn, Leopard, Maple Pug (first record), Narrow-winged Pug (first record), Orange Sallow, Pale Eggar (first record), Pearly Underwing, Pink-barred Sallow, Sallow Kitten, Scarce Bordered Straw (first record), Scarce Silver-lines, Silver Y (best autumn—maximum 39), Six-striped Rustic, Small Square-spot (best ever) and White-spotted Pug. Micros included; *Rhyacionia buoliana*, *Catoptria pinella*, *Parapoynx stratiotata*, *Udea ferrugalis*, *Orthopygia glaucinalis*, *Pyralis farinalis* and *Trachycera suavella*.

Fressingfield, May to September 2000 - P. J. Vincent

Leopard, Peach Blossom, Buff Arches, Cream Wave, Early Thorn, Swallow-tailed, Peppered, Waved Umber, Privet Hawk, Lime Hawk, Elephant Hawk, Buff Ermine, Light Arches, Dusky swallow, Scarce Silver-lines, Plain Golden Y, Hummingbird Hawk and Dusky Thorn.

Suffolk Moth Survey - Tony Prichard

Alder Carr Fen - 18 th August 2000

The fen is situated alongside the A14 north of Needham Market and is a county council reserve. It consists of a small area of fen and alder carr.

Some of the species which we don't see too much of included Lesser-spotted Pinion, an elm feeder, and *Eucalybites auroguttella*, which feeds on various types of St John's-wort, often these are found on roadside verges and so the moth probably wandered in from the A14. Magpie Moth seems to be having a bit better year down here having been recorded at several sites we have recently visited.

Other moths of interest included ;Orange Swift, *Argyresthia goedartella*, *Ypsolopha scabrella*, *Plutella xylostella*, *Cnephasia longana*, *Bactra lancealana*, *Zeiraphera isertana*, *Galleria mellonella*, Small Phoenix, Dingy Shell, Canary-shouldered Thorn, Early Thorn, Ruby Tiger, Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing, Knot Grass, Mouse Moth, Rosy Rustic, Burnished Brass and Straw Dot.

Staverton Wood - 25 th August 2000

This private site is well-known for its large number of very ancient pollarded oaks and holly trees. A warm but windy night meant that we headed for shelter amongst the trees as best we could. Unfortunately the sheet light had attracted over a dozen hornets within 5 minutes of turning on so we moved the sheet. My other trap when we checked had also attracted about 50 hornets so that got switched off. We missed out on the target species of Oak Lutestring but did pick up a new species for everyone there - *Acleris literana* - a rare moth in Suffolk. The last I know of this species is from Morley's 1930's county lepidoptera if anyone has any more recent records I would really like to know. We had a few migrants; a singleton Vestal, a couple of White-points, *Plutella xylostella* and Silver Y.

Other interesting species included; Frosted Orange, *Anthophila fabriciana*, *Ypsolopha parenthesella*, Feathered Gothic and Straw Dot.

Market Weston Fen - 1st September 2000

This remnant of valley fen is one of the finest in East Anglia. The main plant is great fen sedge which is cut on a four year rotation for the thatching trade. Beyond the fen is an area of heath and this is where the lights were set up. This was our second visit of the year to this SWT reserve. The weather was distinctly cooler than our previous visit and with a clearing sky and fullish moon the temperature rapidly dropped.

Good numbers of Feathered Gothic were seen around the sheet light in the heathland habitat along with singletons of Dusky Thorn, Hedge Rustic, Pinion-streaked Snout and *Pandemis cinnamomeana*.

Darsham Marshes - 8 th September 2000

Darsham marshes is vast expanse of marsh and fen in the Minsmere valley. We set up the traps on the common above the marshes which consists of scrub and grassland. The evening was overcast with some rain and temperatures were quite warm around 15°C.

Around thirty species made it into the traps including; Autumnal Rustic, Bulrush Wainscot, Centre-barred Sallow, Dusky Thorn, Mouse, Rosy Rustic, Straw Dot and White-point. Micros included;

Udea ferrugalis, *Ypsolopha parenthesesella*, *Argyresthia goedartella*, *Epinotia ramella* and *Zeiraphera isertana*.

Minsmere Day Meeting - 9th September 2000

Only attended by Tony, Neil and warden Alice the main species found were; Pale Tussock larva, Silver Y, Orange Sallow, Yellow-tail larva. Also noted were some common leaf miners.

Westleton Heath - 15th September 2000

Cancelled due to poor weather and the fuel crisis.

Lineage Woods - 22 nd September 2000

Lineage woods is another coniferised Forest Enterprise managed wood near Lavenham. Along with the 65 hornets we potted up at the sheet, the more interesting species included; Large Thorn, Mallow and Beaded Chestnut.

The evening floor show was supplied by Matthew who showed his gymnastic ability by demonstrating his hornet avoiding tactics. The most impressive of which was a backwards somersault while still sitting in his folding chair, this produced a unanimous score of 10 from all the judges present!

Other interesting moths included; *Hypatima rhomboidella*, *Acleris emargana*, *Epinotia ramella*, *Udea ferrugalis*, *Nomophila noctuella*, Spruce Carpet, Canary-shouldered Thorn, Brindled Green, Barred Sallow, Pink-barred Sallow, Sallow and Frosted Orange.

Cutlers Wood - 29th September 2000

Cutlers wood is a privately owned piece of woodland, south of Ipswich, which is mainly used for rearing pheasants. We set up the sheet adjacent to the concrete track which bisects the wood and placed the traps on the two footpaths that lead into the wood, one on the east side and one on the west. The temperature was in the low teens for most of the night but we still managed over twenty five species. These included; Centre-barred Sallow, Brindled Green, Bordered Beauty, Spruce Carpet, *Epinotia ramella*, *Ypsolopha parenthesesella*, Autumnal Rustic, *Hypsopygia costalis* and the seasons first Merveille du Jour.

Checklist of the Lepidoptera Recorded from the British Isles by J. D. Bradley - Jon Nicholls

Whilst at the annual AES exhibition at Kempton Park this year while having my coffee I happened to sit next to David Bradley, John Bradley's son, who was responsible for editing and preparing the checklist with his brother Michael. He was interestingly not an entomologist but at the show to sell copies of the second edition of the checklist. So I bought one. It consists of an A4 sized book with 116 pages. The main part of the book is the checklist set out in B+F order. Each entry has the number, species name and some notes on foodplant and any salient points such as localised distribution. At the end there is also a useful index of both Latin and English names. This is a very handy guide to the moths names, especially their spelling!, but also the notes give a flavour of what to expect - at only £12.00 it is a 'must have' book.

Just a thought - Jon Nicholls

The following is a quote from British Wildlife's 'Wildlife Reports' by Steve Cham; " Proof of breeding is an important criterion for dragonfly-recording. Adult dragonflies are highly mobile and are likely to turn up anywhere. Such records, whilst useful for demonstrating their dispersal abilities, offer little to the

study and conservation of dragonflies. This is especially important in the light of the increasing numbers of migrant species gracing our shores.”

With the recent increases in the popularity of mothing this made me think about why we do it(!) . Here are a few suggestions;

- fun and interest
- to know what is there
- for baseline data
- to detect change
- to find out what is rare or common
- for the formulation of management plans
- to learn about ecology
- to produce distribution maps and checklists
- to influence policies on the environment — SSSIs
- for political reasons– agenda 25
- to make money
- to formulate species recovery plans
- to produce biodiversity action plans
- to get a bigger list than the next man or woman.

You may identify with some or all of these reasons to a smaller or lesser extent, I know I do, and you may have some reasons of your own — its just a thought?